



TOMPKINS COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

The Tompkins County EMC has seats for all local municipalities. The following seats are currently filled:

- City of Ithaca
- Town of Caroline
- Town of Danby
- Town of Dryden
- Town of Groton
- Town of Ithaca
- Town of Ulysses
- Village of Dryden
- Village of Cayuga Heights
- Village of Freeville
- Village of Lansing

Vacant seats currently exist for the towns of Enfield, Newfield and Lansing, as well as the Villages of Groton and Trumansburg.

In addition, the EMC can have 12 at-large voting seats. Non-voting associate members also serve on the Council, and vote on EMC committees.

From the County Planning Department, Scott Doyle, Senior Planner, serves as the EMC staff coordinator. Other support includes an administrative assistant who takes minutes and coordinates recruitment. In 2014, Jennifer Turner was the administrative assistant. The County also appoints a Legislative liaison.

Guests are often invited to give special reports and presentations on environmental topics.

2014 Annual Report

Environmental Management Council



The EMC 2014 Annual

The Tompkins County Environmental Management Council – the EMC – was created in 1971 by a resolution of the County Board of Representatives. The EMC was founded to act as an advisory body to the County Legislature on matters affecting the natural features of the county regarding:

- Use
- Development and
- Preservation.

The EMC was tasked with: identifying problems, proposing priorities, and

coordinating activities in the development and management of our natural resources.

It also provides a public forum for discussing issues related to the natural environment in Tompkins County.

The EMC reports directly to the County Legislature's Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee (PDEQ). TC Planning Department staff and equipment are utilized to help support the EMC.

In 2014, Stephen Nicholson served as Chair for the fourth

consecutive year. He has been the Chair for this Council for ten years total. He is the primary contact between the EMC and the County Legislature. Brian Eden, John Dennis and Carolyn Peterson served as Vice Chairs.

EMC members are appointed by the County to serve two-year terms. Currently, there are 20 voting members.

Municipal members served as an important link between county-wide and local issues by giving periodic municipal reports to the county.

2014 Membership Roster

Officers:

Stephen Nicholson, Chair
Spring Buck, Vice Chair
Brian Eden, Vice Chair
Carolyn, Peterson, Vice Chair

Committee Chairs:

Brian Eden, Energy
John Dennis, Environmental
Review
Steve Nicholson, UNA
Spring Buck, Plastic Bag
Reduction

Municipality Members:

Steve Bissen, Town of Dryden
Ben Carver, Village of
Trumansburg
John Dennis, Village of Lansing
Brian Eden, Village of Cayuga
Heights
Pegi Ficken, Town of Groton
John Hertzler, Town of
Ulysses
Vladimir Micic, Town of Ithaca
Stephen Nicholson, Town of
Caroline
Tom Shelley, Ithaca CAC

Linda Spielman, Village of
Dryden
Ron Szymanski, Village of
Freeville

Associate Members:

Spring Buck, At-Large
Kenny Christianson, At-Large
Karen Edelstein, Associate
Member (UNA)
Martha Ferger, At Large
Peter Harriott, Associate
Member
Dooley Kiefer, Associate
Member

Dan Klein, Legislature Liaison
Jim McGarry, At-Large
Carolyn Peterson, At-Large
Margaret Soulestein, At-Large
Gary Stewart, At-Large
Roger Yonkin, At-Large

TCPD Staff:

Scott Doyle, EMC
Coordinator, Tompkins
County Planning
Department
Jennifer Turner, Administrative
Assistant, TCPD

2014 Guest Presentations and Discussions

- **Residential Biomass Heating:** Guillermo Metz, CCETC, talked about the wood/pellet stove change-out funded through NYSERDA.
- **Ithaca's Wastewater Treatment Facility:** Jose Lozano, director of this facility, gave a comprehensive tour to EMC members.
- **Report on Onodaga County's stormwater management program:** Madison Quinn gave an educational presentation on Onodaga County's impressive and comprehensive stormwater plan.
- **Tompkins County's Comprehensive Management Plan:** Principal Planner Scott Doyle outlined TC's 10-step plan on energy, climate and natural resource protection.
- **Solar Tompkins Kicks In :** Brian Eden reported that Solar Tompkins is up and running, and that the enrollment deadline for area residents is July 31.
- **Pesticides and Bee Colony Collapse:** Brian Eden updated the EMC on plants sold by area retailers sprayed with pesticides that harm local bees.
- **UNA boundaries and new aerial photography:** Help with UNA boundary delineation is aided by new aerial photos.
- **Furnace retrofitting for area residents:** Howard Chong, assistant professor of Economics and Sustainability at Cornell, gave a presentation on the challenges to getting the community to retrofit their furnaces.
- **EPA's local advisory committee and the scope of their work:** Carolyn Peterson reported on her role on this advisory committee, which serves to look at EPA rules and address how the effect local government.

- **Residential Wind Turbines:** Kelly Frank, electrical engineer and installation manager, and Gary Bush, director of engineering, both from Weaver Wind Energy, gave a

presentation entitled "The State of the Small Wind Industry: Is a Wind Turbine Right for You?" They reported on the history and viability of residential wind turbine ownership.



2014 Energy Committee Highlights

Members: Brian Eden (Chair), Kenney Christianson, Peter Harriott, John Hertzler, Dooley Kiefer.

- **Sponsored energy-related community programs** – The Energy Committee sponsored two programs to educate and gather community input on the draft State Energy Plan, one on March 5 (TC Public Library) and one on April 23 (Unitarian Church). More than 100 attended both. Filed public comments by the March 31 deadline.
- **Gave a presentation on non-fossil fuel alternatives** – In July, co-sponsored a presentation on Alternative Visions for Economic Development in Lansing.
- **Participated in a fracking conference** – On November 15, the Committee participated at Ithaca College's conference called Collateral Damage from Fracking: Coming Together to Protect our Community.
- **Co-sponsored a Climate Change event** – The Committee co-sponsored an event with the League of Women Voters on Responding to Climate Change at the Tompkins County Library on November 17.
- **Eased the way for residential solar energy** – Promoted the adoption of the NY-Sun's Unified



Solar Permit by local municipalities. For some, a barrier to installing a solar system is the confusing permit process. This new permit procedure makes it easier to get a permit for a grid-tied solar electric installation.

- **Urged a solar energy real property tax exemption** – Gave a presentation to the County's Planning, Energy and Environmental Quality Committee urging them to opt-in to Section 487 of the Real Property Tax Law, which provides a 15-year tax exemption for residential solar systems. The Legislature (who had previously opted out of on May 15, 2012) unanimously opted in to the provision on July 15, 2014.
- **Helped ban the boiler** – Supported the City of Ithaca's proposed local law to ban all outdoor wood boilers.
- **Attended a workshop** – On May 3, Committee members attended an all-day workshop on micro-hydro installations in the Town of Lansing.
- **Participated in code training** – Helped with code training on November 18-19 at the Town of Ithaca featuring the 2014 NYS Energy Conservation Code for commercial buildings.
- **Helped reconcile conflicting county energy policies** – Raised awareness and encouraged resolution of the County Legislature to regarding conflicting policies related

to the County's Area Economic Development Strategy.

- **Researched pipeline alternatives** – Looked into alternatives to the proposed natural gas pipeline in West Dryden and Lansing.
- **Marched in NYC** – Attended the Climate March in NYS on September 20, and then held a supporting rally in Ithaca's Dewitt Park.
- **And more** – See following page for details.

EMC Energy Committee Report

Members: Brian Eden (Chair), Kenney Christianson, Peter Harriott, John Hertzler, Dooley Kiefer.

The Committee sponsored several community programs focused on energy issues. To assist the community in submitting public comments, programs on the draft State Energy Plan were held; March 5 (Tompkins County Public Library) and April 23 (Unitarian Church) with more than 100 in attendance at both. Among the several presentations provided were those by Jackson Morris, Director, Eastern Energy, Natural Resources Defense Council and Jessica Azulay, Program Director, Alliance for a Green Energy Economy. The Energy Committee subsequently filed comments by the deadline of May 31. In July we co-sponsored a presentation on Alternative (non-fossil fuel based) Visions for Economic Development in the Town of Lansing. On November 15 we participated in a conference at Ithaca College: Collateral Damage from Fracking: Coming Together to Protect Our Communities. We also co-sponsored an event with the League of Women Voters on Responding to Climate Change on November 17.

The Committee promoted the adoption of the NY-Sun's Unified Solar Permit by local municipalities. A barrier to installing a solar system for many residents is the confusing permit process. This standard permit procedure would provide homeowners with a combined building and electrical permit for a grid-tied solar electric installation.

The Chair, along with Melissa Kemp, Director of Solar Tompkins, made a presentation to the County's Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee urging them to Opt in to Section 487 of the Real Property Tax Law that provides a 15-year real property tax exemption for residential solar systems. The Tompkins County Legislature which had opted-out on May 15, 2012 (LL No.1-2012) unanimously opted in to the provision on July 15, 2014 (LL No.4-2014).

The Committee supported the City of Ithaca's proposed local law to ban all outdoor wood boilers. On May 3, Committee members attended an all-day workshop on micro-hydro installations that was held in the Town of Lansing. The EMC held a meeting and participated in a tour of the Ithaca Area Wastewater Facility in March. The Facility recently invested \$8M in energy efficiency and energy conservation upgrades. Of special interest was the newly installed biogas production and storage equipment, which will enable the facility in becoming 70% energy self-sufficient.

Increased building energy efficiency is dependent on adherence to the NYS Energy Conservation Code. Discussion with local code enforcement staff as well as building contractors indicated that neither had a sufficient understanding of the Code to faithfully adhere to it. We urged greater attention and resources be devoted to trainings of both sectors to encourage better buildings with building science. We participated in code trainings on 11/18-19 at the Town of Ithaca Hall featuring the 2014 NYS Energy Con-

servation Code for commercial buildings. We hope to sponsor a similar training for residential buildings in 2015.

NYS utilities spend more than \$10M per year supporting their requests for rate increases from the NYS Public Service Commission, which they then pass on to ratepayers. More than 40 states have an independent agency to support ratepayers in rate-setting proceeding cases. This is not the law in NYS. We support legislation that would fund an Office of Independent Utility Consumer Advocacy.

The Tompkins County Area Development's Economic Development Strategy has been somewhat in conflict with the County's long-term greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. We have encouraged the County Legislature to reconcile these two policies.

On April 25 the NYS Public Service Commission issued an order instituting the Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) Proceeding (14-M-0101). This initiative aims to align electric utility practices and our regulatory paradigm with technological advances in information management and power generation and distribution.

The Committee provided several written comments to the NYS Public Service Commission on various provisions of the proposed program. The Committee has initiated some community education efforts on Shared Renewables, a program that allows residents with limited solar exposure to join with others to contract with those who may have sufficient solar

exposure and space to generate community solar benefits and Community Choice Aggregation (this state policy enables local governments to aggregate electricity demand within their jurisdictions in order to procure clean energy electrical supplies while maintaining the existing provider for transmission and distribution services).

Tompkins County won't achieve its greenhouse gas emission reduction goals if we import new sources of methane. In this regard the Committee has researched alternatives to a proposed natural gas pipeline in West Dryden and Lansing. Working with others, we contributed to a presentation entitled "Building and Heating with the Climate in Mind."

Other important events worth noting were The People's Climate March in NYC in September with approximately 400,000 in attendance and a supporting local rally in Dewitt Park. Also on November 2, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 5th Assessment Report was released. Secretary General of the United Nations Ban-Ki-Moon noted that climate change is set to impose "severe, widespread, and irreversible impacts" on Earth. We shall continue to coordinate our activities with other local organizations dedicated to these issues including Solar Tompkins, the County's Energy Road Map Steering Committee, Smart Energy Policy Initiatives, Ratepayer and Community Intervenor, the Solutions Group, the Campaign for Renewable Energy, and the Energy Democracy Working Group.

Environmental Review Committee Report

An annual report of a committee reporting to the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council

February 2014 —

Discussion of growing concern over the large coal ash dump north of Milliken Station and possible drainage to Cayuga Lake. In addition, the DEC State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit requires installation of a wedge wire screen to keep small aquatic organisms from being sucked into the cooling water intake, but this has not been enforced. The dredging of Cayuga Inlet to bring the flood control channel into compliance with the Corps of Engineers design remains a problem for the City of Ithaca, with methods (dewatering site; geomembranes) and costs (estimated \$80-120 million) at issue.

The City of Ithaca restriction of waterfowl hunting is not being enforced.

May 2014 — The possibility of Bell Station land becoming a state forest is on hold. Chair John Dennis toured the Cargill salt mine. The committee also reviewed the proposed apartment development near Cornell Heights, where questions of environmental impact, scale, and style have been raised.

June 2014 — The waste de-icing fluid (propylene glycol) used at the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport is no longer leaking into McKinney Creek. Beginning the fall, it will no longer be trucked to Watertown but be processed at the Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Plant. The committee reviewed an upscale apartment project proposed for the Inlet north of the Farmers' Market. We will be following the Ithaca's efforts to create a stormwater fee.

September 2014 — The committee continued research and discussion on

coal ash in the landfill. Margaret Soulstein's detailed comments on the City's stormwater fee have had no impact. Highway ditching throughout the county is getting worse.

October 2014 — A committee member met with the City of Ithaca police chief to discuss the 1994 prohibiting of waterfowl hunting. They are hoping it may finally be enforced. A DEC forester will tour Bell Station in January. Beekeepers have expressed concern about the use of neonicotine pesticides on Finger Lakes Land Trust lands.

December 2014 — The Committee submitted ten pages of comments on the County's draft Comprehensive Plan and eight pages of comments on the power plant's water-withdrawal permit. John Dennis continues to be involved with the LPG storage project on Seneca Lake.

Plastic Bag Use Reduction Committee

2014 Committee Members were Spring Buck (Chair), Brian Eden, Steve Nicholson, Carolyn Peterson, and Tom Shelley.

February 2014 — Met in February. Nothing new to report.

March 2014 — Met in March with Carol Chock, Chair of Tompkins County Planning, Economic Development, Energy and Environmental Review Committee, looking for direction from the County and from Barbara Eckstrom, Solid Waste Management Director.

May 2014 — Met in May with legislators Dan Klein and Carol Chock, and also met with Barbara Eckstrom. There does not appear to be a lot of opposition or objection. We are uncertain about the Mayor's position.



**TOMPKINS
COUNTY
PLANNING
DEPARTMENT**

121 East Court Street
Ithaca, New York
14830 .

Phone:
607-274-5587

E-mail:
EMC@tompkins-co.org

Website:
www.tompkinscountyny.gov/emc



Document by Pam Pariso
Tompkins County Planning Department

2014 UNA Report

Unique Natural Areas

Members: Steve Nicholson (Chair), Steven Bissen, Spring Buck, Karen Edelstein, Brian Eden, Dooley Kiefer, Carolyn Peterson, Linda Spielman, David Weinstein, Robert Wesley.

Robert Wesley and Karen Edelstein continue to serve as consultants with funding provided by the County to assist with UNA Update efforts.

Activity of the UNA Committee in 2014 included:

- Began research into designating the Bell Station property, which is just north of the Cayuga power plan, as a possible new UNA.
- Finished the boundary revisions and justification for changes on the first batch of 35 UNAs.
- Finished the boundary revisions and justifications for the second batch of 42 UNAs.

tifications for the second batch of 42 UNAs.

- Met with representatives from Cornell to discuss the disputed expansion of UNA-106 (Sapsucker Woods), ultimately giving them until late spring of 2015 to provide updated information.
- Presented two slideshows on the proposed boundary changes to the EMC.
- Introduced Resolutions UNA 2014-a and UNA 2014-2, adopted by the EMC in December, which approved the boundary revisions to 77 UNAs.

In addition to exploring Bell Station, UNA-106 (Sapsucker Woods) and UNA-2 (Salmon Creek Woods) will be revised in 2015. Notification of landowners and municipalities about the new boundary changes will occur this year.



Gorge waterfall, Ithaca, New York